

HOMETOWN SECURITY STUDY COMMITTEE

Draft Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2003, 1145 hours

Members Present: Chair General Stanley Heng, Doug Ahlberg, Chief Tom Casady, Bruce Dart, Jeff Fortenberry, Jim Geist, Larry Hudkins, Craig Madsen, Don Marti, Major Guy Moon, Julie Righter, Oscar Rios Pohirieth, Chief Mike Spadt, Ken Svoboda

Not in Attendance: Carol Brown, Annette McRoy

City Staff & Other Public Present: Jeff Cole (Staff), Corrie Kielty (Staff), Darrell Podany (Council Office), Mike Miriovsky (EMS Inc)

Meeting Protocol

The proposed meeting protocol was discussed. Because of a question raised at the last meeting regarding whether subcommittees are open and subject to public accountability and disclosure, Ken Svoboda contacted the City Attorney for an opinion. Although it doesn't specifically state anything in the rules for subcommittees, the City Attorney's suggestion was that subcommittee meetings be open to the public. Information contained in the protocol is standard operating procedures for Mayoral Committees and is in conformance with the City Charter and guidelines for public disclosure. **Jim Geist moved approval of the Mayor's protocol draft. Seconded by Ken Svoboda. Motion carried by unanimous vote.**

Mayor's Charge to the Committee

There was some confusion among members about the scope of the Mayor's Charge to the Committee and they felt it needs to be defined. There are two issues mentioned in the Charge; one is the broader issue of public safety in the community, the other is the concern in light of the international situation and the realistic possibility of terrorists and weapons of mass destruction. The committee needs to consider what will be emphasized first, the general overview of day to day public safety preparedness in the community or a response to acts of terror. Members felt these two issues are not unrelated and need to be considered together. The Mayor has three primary city public safety agencies that he is responsible for; the Police Department, 911 Emergency Communications Center and Lincoln Fire & Rescue. All three agencies assert they need more resources. It was the consensus that the focus of this committee is to take a snapshot of where the public protection services are today and then recommend to the Mayor and City Council where we go from there. General Heng will meet with the Mayor to clarify his charge to the committee. It was felt that the whole of Lancaster County be considered when making recommendations. The question was raised as to whether the committee is charged to find the resources to meet the needs of the Police, Fire, 911, or only charged to identify the needs. Before work groups are set up, it is important to know what the agencies are trying to accomplish and what resources are necessary to reach that level.

Presentations

Police Department: Chief Casady summarized the information that he provided in his packet. The Police Department has 303 officers and 107 civilian employees, a very small police department compared to other cities. Problems that the size is causing are four:

- #1, difficulty servicing calls for service (police dispatches)
- #2, difficulty creating the kind of police work that the community expects
- #3, difficulty providing time for proactive involvement with the community, and
- #4, difficulty in freeing up officers for training.

Over the past 12 years, both Mayor Johanns and Mayor Wesely have tried to increase the number of police officers fairly consistently and the Department has grown at a rate slightly faster than overall population growth. There currently are 1.34 officers per 1000 population.

Chief Casady's goal is to have 1.5 officers per 1000 population. The average number of officers on the street is 35-40; the low point is the early hours of the morning and the high point being in late afternoon. The Police Department is not in any crisis predicament but without more police officers, it cannot meet the public's expectations.

Oscar Rios Pohirieth asked what effort has been made to educate the public on what is going on in the police department. Chief Casady responded that the Department conducts a Citizen's Police Academy twice a year that involves members of the community. There is also information available on the internet and public access cable TV. However this information does not reach most people in the community and they are unaware of what the problems are. Larry Hudkins asked if there was a mechanism in place with the Sheriff's Department in the event of an emergency or major disturbance. Chief Casady responded there is in place a mutual aid agreement between the Police Department, State Patrol, Sheriff's Office and University Police, and there have been times when all agencies were involved in one incident. Don Marti asked for information related to officer retention and officer replacement, information on what is necessary as far as civilian staff to support officers, and if there are any standards for clearance rates. Chief Casady said he has all that data and will provide that information.

Fire Department: Chief Spadt summarized on the information he provided in his packet of information. The Fire Department has 290.5 employees who operate out of 14 stations. Since Lincoln first organized a Fire Department, firefighters have worked 24 hour shifts, which is set by State Statute and cannot be changed unless there is a mutual agreement between the firefighters and the City of Lincoln that a change be made. Firefighters respond to fires, hazmat calls, medical emergencies, and other requests for help. Training is an everyday occurrence for every firefighter. Physical fitness is stressed and firefighters are allowed 90 minutes out of their day to exercise. In addition, every business in the community is contacted on an annual basis for a business inspection and public education is conducted to educate people on what to do in the event of a fire.

The National Fire Protection Association sets national standards necessary to maintain a safe operation. The Insurance Services Organization rates the jurisdiction, and that rating impacts property owners. From the Fire Department's standpoint, quick intervention, fast response times, adequate equipment, and adequate personnel are going to meet with favorable outcomes. These were the reasons for the recommendation for the two new fire stations; to provide to everyone in the community a form of response in an equal fashion.

Chief Spadt was asked to provide a map that shows the location of the current 14 stations as well as the proposed locations. What needs to be decided is what does the community want and what is the acceptable level of risk.

911 Center: Julie Righter said that everything the Police and Fire do has a direct impact on the 911 Center. They are understaffed (barely past where they were when they began operations in the late 70's). They are at the point where they cannot get anything more from their employees and will not be able to meet user agencies' expectations. High worker turnover reflects these difficult work conditions. In response to a question regarding funding, Julie said the majority of their funding is general fund, 4% is from the County because they provide service for the Sheriff's Department, the 911 telephone surcharge is about 1/3 to 1/2 of the budget, and the Fire Department is funding 1.5 employees, which were the only additional staff in the last three years. Don Marti asked if there were any studies that show the number of telephone calls that come into the 911 Center over a period of time. Julie Righter said she has the CAD (computer aided dispatch) statistics but not how many additional calls they are taking at the Communications Center. Since it was time to adjourn the meeting, Julie Righter will take a few minutes at the next meeting to complete her presentation.

Next Meetings

Things to be done at the next meeting: completion of presentation by 911 Center; report from General Heng on the scope of the Mayor's Charge, identifying work groups. It was decided to meet bi-weekly, which allows for ten meetings before the June 1st due date.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 26th, 1145 to 1315 hours in the LPD Classroom.

Meeting adjourned at 1325 hours.

Submitted by:

Virginia Fischer